



# Fast Facts

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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## MOTORCYCLE HELMETS

Motorcycle helmets save lives and taxpayer dollars. That's why legislation signed in 1991 created a universal mandatory motorcycle helmet law. Every state that has adopted mandatory motorcycle helmet laws have also found this to be true.

### Vital Statistics

- California Highway Patrol statistics show that in the first year the helmet law was in effect the number of deaths attributed to motorcycle riders dropped 36 percent while the number of registered motorcycles dropped only 9 percent.
- The number of people hospitalized for motorcycle crash injuries fell 27 percent during the first year that California's law was in place and an additional 9 percent the second year.
- Hospitalizations for brain injuries attributed to motorcycle accidents decreased by 55 percent during the first year and an additional 27 percent during the second year.
- Head injuries are financially draining. The average hospitalization cost for a motorcyclist with a head injury is more than \$43,000.

### All Motorcycle Riders Must Wear Helmets

Requiring helmets only for motorcycle riders under the age of 21 does little to reduce the financial impact of injuries. In California, 80 percent of motorcycle injury costs occur with riders over the age of 21.

Research conducted by the National Highway Traffic Administration demonstrates that states with age-restricted helmet laws have motorcycle death rates comparable to those with no helmet requirements.

### Health Factors

- Less than half of the cost of motorcycle injuries are covered by private health insurance organizations, meaning state taxpayers and health care providers must pay for the remainder of costs.
- Taxpayer expenditures for motorcycle injuries covered by the Medi-Cal program dropped by over one third — from \$28 million a year to \$18 million a year — after the mandatory helmet law took effect.